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Narcotics Cooperation

Summary. As the world's largest processor and distributor of cocaine, Colombia accounts for to 70 percent of the cocaine entering the U.S. In addition, approximately 70 percent of the illicit marijuana consumed in the United States originates from Colombia, which also tablets/distributes nearly 90 percent of the illicit methaqualone (Quaaludes) entering the U.S. market. The USG, through the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM), is currently engaged in a substantial cooperative interdiction effort with the GOC. However, an herbicidal eradication program, similar to that conducted in Mexico, is clearly the most cost effective way to attack the drug problem. With the recent modification of the anti-paraquat Percy Amendment, and the imminent determinations of possible domestic environmental impacts pertaining to herbicidal eradication actions, we hope to persuade the GOC to initiate such a campaign in the near future. End Summary.

Colombia has been a major processing/distribution center of cocaine and coca dervatives originating in Peru and Bolivia since the 1970's. Recently, it has emerged as a burgeoning coca grower itself; about 7,200 acres of coca are currently being cultivated and the amount is increasing at an alarming rate. The DEA estimates that approximately 50,000 metric tons of marijuana were produced from an estimated 65,000 acres in 1981; however, narcotics intelligence estimates maintain about 10,000 metric tons actually entered the U.S. market.

Colombian enforcement agencies have conducted impressive interdiction efforts in the past two years, resulting in unprecedented amounts of bulk marijuana, coca plants, and methaqualone being destroyed/seized. This success is largely attributable to the efforts of the National Police, which has the primary respnsibility for narcotics control in Colombia. Over 1,100 officers, in company-sized Special Anti-Narcotics Units (SANU's), operate throughout the country with operational and tactical support from the Colombian military. The Judicial Police (an arm of the Attorney General's office) has also contributed to the anti-narcotics effort, concentrating primarily on manual coca eradication.

The U.S. contribution to the joint anti-drug effort has centered primarily in commodity assistance, including a 105' patrol craft, a Stol-type aircraft, helicopters, communications and investigative equipment, vehicles and spare parts, and field equipment. Training for enforcement and customs personnel, field and operational support, fuel, lubricants, etc. have also been provided. This assistance was rendered

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largely through a one-time congressionally mandated $16 million in FY 1980. In FY 1981, $3.6 million was committed, and a total of $7.3 million has been budgeted for FY 1982 and FY 1983. Cumulative anti-narcotics assistance since FY 1973 totals $35 million.

Narcotics-related violence has become pervasive in Colombia and it is widely believed that corruption has penetrated all levels of society. There is also substantial evidence that many farmers are turning away from traditional food crops to grow the more profitable coca plant, the seedlings of which are often supplied to the farmers by the traffickers themselves. Information linking insurgency with drug trafficking has also been evidenced, particularly with Cuban involvement. The impact of "narcodollars" on the Colombian economy has been difficult to determine; however, narcotics earnings have been significant source of foreign exchange and have thwarted GOC efforts to control domestic inflation. All in all, it is clear that the adverse effect of the drug problem on the economic, political and social fabric of one of Latin America's more durable democracies could be far more profound than anyone suspects.

Unfortunately, neither overall production nor trafficking networks have been significantly disrupted despite the increasingly effective interdiction campaign. The success of the Mexican eradication program has convinced Ambassador Boyatt and INM that the only cost-effective way to address the drug problem in Colombia is to eliminate the drug at its source, preferably by aerial application of herbicides. Although Colombian officials have expressed concern over the dangerous impact of drug trafficking, the perception that the U.S. is lax, both in attitude and in penal sanctions -- particularly towards marijuana -- continues to prevail. It is clear that the GOC will be skeptical of conducting an inevitably controversial eradication program in Colombia until it feels that the U.S. is also actively pursuing eradication activities domestically.

[redacted] Before the USG may proceed to negotiate such a program with the GOC, however, an Environmental Impact Statement in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and a Concise Environmental Review required by Executive Order 12114 must be completed. These requirements are currently being addressed by INM, and will be completed by the fall of this year.

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FACT SHEET

NARCOTICS COOPERATION

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--COLOMBIA IS THE PROCESSING/DISTRIBUTION CENTER FOR UP TO 70% OF THE COCAINE ENTERING THE U.S. AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE MARIJUANA IMPORTED INTO THE U.S.

--COCA CULTIVATION IS RAPIDLY BECOMING SIGNIFICANT IN COLOMBIA, INTENSIFYING THE POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED COCAINE PRODUCTION.

--NEARLY 90% OF THE ILLICIT METHAQUALONE (QUAALUDES) CONSUMED IN THE U.S. IS TABLETED IN COLOMBIA.

--USG ANTI-NARCOTICS FUNDING HAS PROVIDED: $13.0 MILLION FROM FY 1973 THROUGH FY 1979; $16.0 MILLION FOR FY 1980; $9.9 MILLION FOR FY 1981 THROUGH FY 1983. THESE FUNDS HAVE PRINCIPALLY SUPPORTED NARCOTICS INTERDICTION EFFORTS, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN LIMITED MANUAL COCA-ERADICATION.

--WE HOPE IN THE FUTURE TO ENGAGE THE GOC IN A COOPERATIVE ERADICATION EFFORT AGAINST BOTH MARIJUANA AND COCA.

WATCH OUT FOR:

--DOES THE UNITED STATES INTEND TO INITIATE A PARAQUAT ERADICATION PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA?

We are presently in the process of evaluating the environmental impact of using paraquat to eradicate marijuana and coca. Until these studies are complete and impact determinations made, we will not discuss an eradication program with the Betancur Administration, nor provide support for any such program. However, based on our previous experience in Mexico with both marijuana and opium poppies, we believe that eradication is the most effective method of combatting illicit drug trafficking.

--WHY DOESN'T THE USG STOP IT'S DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF MARIJUANA?

The eradication of illegal drugs produced in the U.S. is one of many objectives in President Reagan's Federal Strategy on eliminating illicit drugs. At present, marijuana eradication programs are being conducted in several states, and the State of Florida has made a firm commitment to eradicate marijuana through the spraying of paraquat. While the approaches differ among States and Localities, the Federal Government, in support of the new strategy, will strongly encourage and provide technical assistance and cooperation to local authorities in expanding these eradication efforts.

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